

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Elizabeth Kline, and I am an Assistant Professor in Residence in the Department of Molecular and Cell Biology at the University of Connecticut. I live in Manchester and am also a part of Connecticut Mutual Aid: East of the River.

I enthusiastically support HB 6616. Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 26 regardless of immigration status is an important step in making sure our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we all need and deserve. Ultimately, I want CT to provide healthcare to all immigrants of any age: putting an age limit on who deserves healthcare is inhumane. We are all worthy of safety and care. I want to live in a community with healthy families. For CT to achieve a future like that, we must ensure that people have access to healthcare coverage.

Because I was granted stability and quality healthcare as I grew up, I was able to earn my PhD and am now extremely proud to teach biology and clinical research at UConn. I oversee undergraduate research projects in the emergency department at Connecticut Children's Hospital in Hartford. My students, predominantly ages 20-22, are able to make their crucial contributions to our research team because they are healthy. When they get sick, they have access to healthcare so they can recover and get back to their studies. Everyone deserves that level of care. Healthcare must be accessible past the age of 18 regardless of immigration status in order to protect all of my students. The professional development experiences I offer can only exist if my students are well enough to be at work.

There is nothing that makes an adult less worthy of care than a newborn. I want CT to take this step of expanding HUSKY access to people up to age 26, with the ultimate goal to be coverage for all of my neighbors who have immigrated here, regardless of status. It is unacceptable that, while 95% of the general population of CT with healthcare has insurance, 58% of the roughly 113,000 undocumented immigrants in CT do not have any form of health insurance coverage. I want all parents in CT who bring their children to the hospital where my students work to be able to access care without incurring significant medical debt. The stress of poverty harms children's development and interferes with the pursuit of higher education, something I am passionate about.

I am asking you to support HB6616 and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all community members in CT regardless of age or status.

Thank you for your time,
Elizabeth Marie Kline